



Town of Groton, Connecticut

Meeting Agenda

45 Fort Hill Road
Groton, CT 06340-4394
Town Clerk 860-441-6640
Town Manager 860-441-6630

Representative Town Meeting

Moderator Kevin Power, Representatives Jean-Claude Ambroise, Joe Baril, Nancy E. Barnhart, Alicia Bauer, Nancy E. Beckwith, Michael Collins, Nancy M. Congdon, Warren T. Cooper, Luanne E. DeMatto, Syma Ebbin, Peter Fairbank, Nancy E. Gilly, Patrice Granatosky, Dolores Harrell, Keith L. Hedrick, Lynn Crockett Hubbard, Michael Dean Johnson, Rosanne E. Kotowski, Elizabeth Luck, Jackie Massett, Carole McCarthy, Roscoe Merritt, Constance Miller, Karen F. Morton, Scott Newsome, Dana C. Parfitt, Richard J. Pasqualini, Jr., Tim Plungis, Kristen L. Powers, Don Pratt, Betty A. Prochaska, John F. Scott IV, Jack Sebastian, Dana S. Semeraro, Joan Steinfeld, Irma Streeter, Mark Svencer, Archie C. Swindell, and Robert A. Warn

Wednesday, April 13, 2011

7:30 PM

Groton Senior Center

Regular Meeting

- A. ROLL CALL
- B. MOMENT OF SILENCE AND SALUTE TO THE FLAG
- C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MARCH 9, 2011
- D. CITIZENS' PETITIONS
- E. RECEPTION OF COMMUNICATIONS
- F. REPORT OF THE TOWN MANAGER:
 - 1. Financial report
 - 2. Monthly briefing
- G. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS
- H. LIAISON REPORTS
- I. COMMITTEE REPORTS
 - 1. FINANCE - Chairman Hedrick
 - 2. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & SERVICES - Chairman Pratt
 - 3. EDUCATION - Chairman Swindell
 - 4. RECREATION - Chairman Warn
 - 5. PUBLIC SAFETY - Chairman Parfitt
 - 6. PUBLIC WORKS - Chairman Collins
 - 7. RULES & PROCEDURES - Chairman Scott
- J. OTHER BUSINESS
 - Orientation to the FYE2012 Budget
 - 2010-0181 FYE2012 Budget Discussion
 - FYE2012 BUDGET DISCUSSION

Legislative History**8/18/2010 Representative Town Meeting Discussed**

Rep. Kotowski requested that a standing referral be added to the RTM agenda under "Other Business" to enable budget discussion. She feels this will allow the RTM to establish goals and identify items to be reduced or eliminated in next year's budget prior to the budget deliberations. She would like to initiate communication with the Town Manager, Board of Education and Town Council before the Manager's proposed budget is finished. She suggests that a budget be developed that would not increase taxes for Groton taxpayers. She commented that taxes in Groton have increased more than any other Town in the region. She mentioned that many residents of her district are suffering as a result of the economic downturn. She observed that union employees of the Town voted twice and rejected concessions to the Town.

Moderator Power stated that a standing referral will appear on the agenda. This will allow discussion prior to budget deliberations in May. He mentioned that this was done last year.

10/13/2010 Representative Town Meeting Discussed

Rep. Kotowski expressed her concern in regard to the raises authorized for the School Central Office administrative employees which range from 5% to 17%. She believes that the Town and Board of Education (BOE) should be fiscally responsible during the current economic situation.

Rep. Massett requested that department heads be invited to the RTM meetings so that they can specify the impact on specific services or items in accordance with reductions that the RTM may recommend during the budget process. She gave several figures as examples.

The Moderator acknowledged that department heads can be invited to address the RTM concerning next year's budget.

Rep. Swindell believes that the disparity between private and public sector wages needs to be addressed. He asked for a freeze on wages for employees and suggested that the Town initiate contact with the unions now for next year's budget. He believes that the mill rate should not increase for next year. He asked for information on what services would be impacted by layoffs and mentioned that the private sector has suffered layoffs, reduced hours and furloughs.

Rep. Morton would like to develop an RTM recommendation by consensus that the Manager and Town Council provide a budget with a zero mill rate increase.

Rep. Ambrose stated that Social Security payments will not be increased this year. He noted that election results in November may impact both State and Federal budgets which subsequently affect municipalities.

School Superintendent Paul Kadri addressed the wage increases for the Central Office administrative staff. He emphasized that the BOE delivered a zero percent budget increase this year but in order to maintain student success and teacher performance, it is impossible to sustain a zero percent budget increase year after year. He volunteered to meet with RTM members in order to provide details about the phase two school construction projects prior to a referendum.

11/10/2010 Representative Town Meeting Discussed

In response to Rep. Swindell, the Moderator noted that the School Superintendent can provide informal preliminary budget information each month under the new monthly agenda item "Report of the School Superintendent". Moderator Power informed Rep. Swindell that as chairman of the education committee, he can contact the Town Clerk's office to schedule public meetings with the Board of Education for informal budget discussions.

Rep. Sebastian commented that the Town needs to review and study Town revenues and not concentrate only on expenditures for the budget.

Moderator Power announced that department heads are being invited to address the RTM in regard to budget. He suggested that Economic Development could be scheduled for January. He invited members to prepare questions and creative ideas concerning economic development in Groton for that meeting.

Rep. Massett commented that the budget brainstorming session was very valuable. She hopes that more such sessions will be held.

Rep. Ambrose expressed concern that the municipal budget is developed prior to knowing what the State's budget is. He acknowledged that many items, such as personnel, pensions and benefits, are governed by contracts and that the most expensive item is personnel. He suggested that if any contracts are due for negotiation, contributions by employees for benefits and pensions should be increased.

In response to Rep. Steinfeld, the Town Manager stated that almost all contracts are due for negotiation in 2011 and that there is no provision in any contract that guarantees against employee layoffs.

12/8/2010 Representative Town Meeting Discussed

Rep. Morton provided a spread sheet on the Board of Education (BOE) central office salary increases or adjustments ranging from three to seventeen percent. The total salary increase for central office staff amounted to \$102,634. She stated that if all BOE employees' salaries had been frozen, the salary increase would have been only \$38,367 for one new position. She noted that teachers had agreed to a wage freeze. She feels that the RTM was misled during budget deliberations when no mention of the upcoming central office salary raises or adjustments were disclosed. She cautioned members that next year's budget outlook is very bleak and that the RTM will need to delve deeper into the budget next year. She mentioned that the Connecticut Society of CPA projections are that the State is bankrupt, and that Connecticut has the highest per capita debt in the nation as well as a negative fund balance. She believes that our town should be cautious about expecting any State money next year.

Rep. Kotowski stated she is upset that the BOE declared that their budget was a bare bones flat budget with "no fluff" during budget deliberations in May. She feels that the \$102,634 in wage increases and adjustments should have been disclosed. She questioned whether if members do not ask the right questions of the BOE, they will continue to omit information that significantly impacts the budget.

Rep. Ebbin noted that the United States needs to improve its international education ranking. She believes that boosting educational scores will help foster a better work force in the future and improve economic conditions in the nation.

Members discussed the direct advantages of having a strong, diverse educational program that helps to create a community that is safe and desirable in which to live.

1/26/2011 Representative Town Meeting Discussed

Rep. Ambrose suggested that the Town review a pilot program for snow removal that was enacted by the City of Quincy, Massachusetts as a possible cost-cutting measure.

The Moderator stated that a copy of the information provided by Rep. Ambrose to the Town Manager and Town Clerk will be included in next month's agenda packet.

Rep. Bauer left at this time.

Rep. Scott expressed his concern with regard to a possible budget increase from Ledge Light Health District in light of a recent announcement that several towns may withdraw from the regional health district. He noted that Groton missed the deadline for notification to withdraw.

Rep. Cooper asked what would replace Ledge Light Health District.

Moderator Power noted that Ledge Light Health District is slated to speak at the February RTM regular meeting. He noted that questions and additional information can be obtained at that time.

Rep. Ambrose stated that several collective bargaining unit agreements are open for negotiation and suggested that the Town increase the health benefit contributions from employees and freeze salaries. He noted that the projected increase in the State budget, which will be announced on February 16, 2011, is only one percent.

Rep. Hedrick agreed with Rep. Ambrose. He noted that he has been approached by residents requesting no tax increase this year. He suggested that this year's budget process will be difficult and that each line item should be scrutinized. He feels that the Council should adopt a budget which will not increase taxes.

Rep. Scott left at this time.

Rep. Gilly requested a change in the budget figure for snow plowing that is more realistic in order to avoid yearly fourth quarter transfers due to cost overruns.

Rep. Pasquilini proposed that the Moderator establish several committees to review department organization and to identify duplication in offices and services that could be consolidated to save money.

In response to Rep. Steinfeld, the Town Manager stated that he has directed department heads to submit a level service budget, a zero percent budget, a negative five percent budget and a negative ten percent budget. He reported that department budgets are being submitted and his review of each department will be ongoing during February.

Rep. Pasqualini requested that a review of middle management positions be completed in order to analyze the ratio of supervisors to front-line workers.

Rep. Ambrose agrees with Rep. Pasqualini. He added that he feels the Town needs to reduce overhead, consolidate agencies and reorganize top and middle management positions.

Rep. Kotowski mentioned her concern with the Phase II School Facilities Program which proposes joint use of the Poquonnock Plains Park entrance with the new proposed middle school on the Claude Chester School property.

Rep. Beckwith left at this time.

The Town Manager explained the review process that is followed for any CIP Bond Ordinance and noted that many changes or revisions are proposed before the final plan is adopted.

The Moderator stated that a referral to the RTM is expected in February and that discussion would take place and action would be taken at the RTM regular meeting in March.

3/9/2011 Representative Town Meeting Discussed

In response to Rep. Ambrose, the Town Manager commented on the proposed State budget which represents level funding with last year. Mr. Oefinger expressed concern about the elimination of the State reimbursement for the Manufacturing and Equipment exemption and the reduction of the Town's personal property grand list. He reported that a phase-in may occur for the elimination of the State Manufacturing and Equipment exemption reimbursement to municipalities. The manager noted that the Town will monitor the Governor's proposed budget and proceed conservatively as it has in the past. He commented that the proposed medical health coverage being offered to municipalities by the State will be reviewed and evaluated for its ability to offer true cost savings to the Town. He noted that any change in coverage would have to be negotiated with the unions as part of the benefits package and that several unions are due for negotiations. He believes that any change to health insurance would be seen in the FYE2013 budget.

Town Clerk Moukawsher advised members that they will be notified by email or phone when the complete package of budget books is ready for pick-up at the Clerk's office.

K. ADJOURNMENT